

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding ground of rejection is respectfully requested in light of the above proposed amendments and the remarks that follow.

At the outset, applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that claims 3-7, 9, 10 and 13-15 have been allowed and that claims 8, 11, 12, 17-22, 24-28 and 36-39 contain allowable subject matter.

The Examiner has rejected the remaining claims 1, 2, 16, 23, 29-35 and 40 under 35 U.S.C. 103 as unpatentable over Ball et al. in view of Bernard et al. for the reasons stated on page 2 of the Official Action.

By this proposed amendment, applicant has rewritten claim 8 in independent form while canceling claim 1. Note that rejected claim 2 was cancelled in a previous Action.

Applicant has also rewritten claim 11 in independent form, thereby placing claims 11 and 12 in condition for allowance.

Independent claim 16 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of allowable claim 17, while claim 17 has been cancelled. Accordingly, claims 16, 18, 20-28 and 31-33 are now in condition for allowance. Note that claims 19, 29 and 30 have been cancelled and that a portion of dependent claim 22 has been deleted to prevent redundancy with respect to claim 21 from which claim 22 now depends.

Independent claim 34 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of allowable claim 36, thereby placing claims 34, 35 and 39 in condition for allowance, with claim 36 now cancelled.

Claims 37 and 38 have also been rewritten in independent form, thereby placing claims 37 and 38 in condition for allowance.

Independent claim 40 has been cancelled.

With this proposed amendment, all of the remaining application claims 3-16, 18, 20-28, 31-35 and 37-39 are in condition for immediate allowance, and early passage to issue is requested. Should any small matters remain outstanding, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned so that the prosecution of this application can be expeditiously concluded.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.

By: _____



Michael J. Keenan
Reg. No. 32,106

MJK:ljb
1100 North Glebe Road, 8th Floor
Arlington, VA 22201-4714
Telephone: (703) 816-4000
Facsimile: (703) 816-4100